

Sevilla hold world champs

AP, Seville

An 85th-minute own-goal by captain Pablo Alfaro on Tuesday gave Brazil a 1-1 draw with Sevilla in a friendly marking the Spanish club's centenary.

Alfaro headed a rebound off the bar into his net to equalize for the five-time world champion after Sevilla substitute Frederic Kanoute had given his team a 62nd-minute lead.

Brazil, which qualified for the World Cup finals on Sunday for the 18th straight time, included Ronaldinho, Kaka, and Cafu in a strong starting lineup at Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium. Ronaldo missed the game because of an injury.

Despite a leisurely first half, the visitors still created several chances.

Striker Adriano clipped the ball narrowly wide in the 20th minute while new Real Madrid signing Robinho twice was thwarted by Sevilla goalkeeper Antonio Notario.

Sevilla also enjoyed its share of opportunities, including one in which goalkeeper Dida was forced into a reflex save to parry Javier Saviola's 33rd-minute chance.

Dubious offside calls disallowed a goal by each side. Sevilla's Brazilian striker Luis Fabiano was denied in the 41st minute as was Robinho two minutes later.

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira made eight changes at the start of the second half including former Sevilla forward Julio Baptista, who became another Madrid signing this summer.



Brazil star Robinho receiving the ball during their friendly against Sevilla at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ganguly admits it

Cricket

REUTERS, Harare

Captain Sourav Ganguly said India lost the match in the first 10 overs of New Zealand's innings after his team went down by six wickets in the final of the Videocon Cup triangular one-day series on Tuesday.

"We knew we had a fighting total on a slow pitch but just didn't finish it off," Ganguly told reporters.

"We definitely lack something otherwise we wouldn't keep losing finals. We just need to put it out of our heads," he added, referring to the fact India have lost 16 of 21 finals dating back to March 1999.

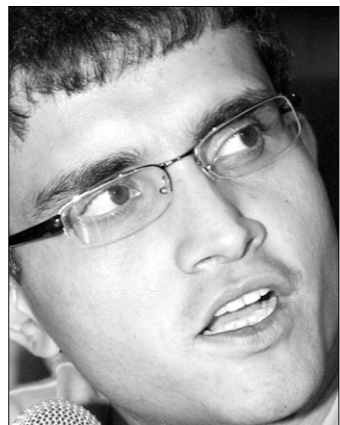
"We lost the match in the first 10 overs but our spinners did very well to pull it back a bit."

New Zealand, chasing 277, scored 82 runs in the opening 10 overs before Nathan Astle's unbeaten 115 carried them to victory in the penultimate over.

India also got off to a flying start after winning the toss, with the top three of Virender Sehwag (75), Ganguly (31) and Mohammad Kaif (93 not out) lifting them to 155 for one in the 25th over.

But none of the other batsmen managed to score more than 20.

"If any of the other top six batsmen had got a 50, we would have won," Ganguly said.



SOURAV GANGULY

Skipper Stephen Fleming was delighted with New Zealand's display.

"We don't have too many trophies in the cabinet but today went perfectly to script," said Fleming.

"We knew we wanted to bowl first because it's given everyone a small advantage in this series and they played almost the way they played against us the other day."

India beat the Kiwis by six wickets on Friday, Kaif hitting 102 not out as they chased down 279.

Fleming struck 61 in 66 balls as he and the experienced Astle shared an opening stand of 121 in 110 balls to lay the platform for Tuesday's victory.

"We knew if we set the tone and got the scoreboard going early, it would take the pressure off the other batsmen," said Fleming, who also praised his bowlers for not wilting in the face of India's early onslaught.

"For the first hour, things did not go our way and it began to look as if it was going to be India's day and they are very hard to stop.

"But this team is now experienced enough to know that you've just got to hang in there and restrict every run and that can lead to wickets."

Left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori dismissed Sehwag and Rahul Dravid, for a duck, in the space of three deliveries and finished with two for 35 as his 10 overs turned the tide.

"Daniel's often done that for us and it was a great spell from him today," Fleming said. "We always have options up our sleeves and that's what I like about captaining this team."

"It's a good feeling to finish a tough tour well."

Romario to go on

RIO DE JANEIRO

Former Brazil striker Romario has shelved plans to retire this December and revealed he will now play on until the end of 2006.

The 39-year-old has enjoyed a decent campaign for Vasco da Gama in the Campeonato Brasileiro, scoring eight goals and dovetailing neatly with strike partner Alex Dias - the tournament's joint leading scorer.

And although injuries have curtailed his participation in a number of games this season, Romario insists he feels fresh enough to go on for another year. "Personally, it will be difficult for me to stop playing this year," he said.

He added: "I'm feeling very well physically and (Vasco da Gama coach) Renato Gaucho gives me freedom in training and matches to do what I want on the pitch."

"That gives me calmness to go on playing in 2006."

Romario also praised the work done by the club's physios, adding: "Usually when I play, my weight is 74 kilograms. Now, I'm playing on 73. I'm feeling much better than last year."

— Internet Source

'Ukraine can win Germany 2006'

KIEV

Oleg Blokhin, one of the great footballing names of the Soviet era, has set his sights on winning the World Cup after becoming the first coach to lead an independent Ukraine to the finals.

"I know that a lot of people will call me crazy but I believe that now we are capable of winning the World Cup," said Blokhin after qualification had been sealed.

Ukraine's celebrations were on hold after they conceded a goal a minute from time and drew 1-1 behind closed doors in Georgia on Saturday. However, almost two hours later Denmark's equaliser in the second minute of stoppage time in Turkey sent Blokhin's side through as winners of Group Two.

The 2-2 draw in Istanbul meant neither Turkey nor Denmark can match Ukraine's total of 24 points, and although European champions Greece can still do so, they have an inferior head-to-head record.

Ukraine are the first European team to qualify apart from hosts Germany. "The dream comes true," said the captain, striker Andriy Shevchenko. "I've got a lot of personal prizes during my career but I always have been dreaming of achieving something with my country."

Blokhin, 52, was an outstanding forward for Dynamo Kiev and won more than 100 caps for the Soviet Union as well as being voted European footballer of the year in 1975.

Earlier this year he resigned as coach after a row over his position on Ukraine's parliament but common sense eventually prevailed and a court ruled that Blokhin could stay on while also retaining his parliamentary seat.

Ukraine, who have missed out on three previous tournaments via the play-offs, join the hosts, Argentina, Japan, Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and the United States in qualifying.

— Internet Source

Brazil and the rest

BRASILIA



With nine months still to go to kick-off, a sixth World Cup victory for Brazil looks like a foregone conclusion.

The world champions, who have a record five titles in the bag, are streets ahead of the rest of the field, as they proved again on Sunday by demolishing Chile 5-0 to book their place at their 18th successive finals tournament.

Chile are usually a tough, frustrating, niggling outfit to play, yet Brazil steamrolled them with four goals in the first 29 minutes.

At the moment, Brazil's dominance of international football is complete.

The national team are world champions, Confederations Cup champions and Copa America champions.

A Brazilian club, Sao Paulo won this year's South American Libertadores Cup, beating another Brazilian side, Atletico Paranaense in the final while a Brazilian player, Ronaldinho was last year voted the best in the world by FIFA.

Players such as Olympique Lyon's Juninho Pernambucano, who would be guaranteed a place in virtually any other national team, have to sit on the bench for Brazil where he will soon be joined by one of Ronaldo, Adriano, Kaka, Robinho and Ronaldinho.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira says he has only room for four of the so-called Magic Quintet in his team and, although Ronaldinho's suspension made the choice simple for him on Sunday, Parreira will soon be faced with a dilemma most other international coaches can only dream of.

Brazilians already regard the current side as one of the best since the legendary 1970 team which won their third title in Mexico and on a par with the memorable, but unsuccessful, 1982 outfit.

Until recently, Brazil's big weakness was that they struggled against teams who packed their defences.

Last November, Brazil were held to a goalless draw at home by Colombia in a World Cup qualifier and needed a late goal to overcome a stubborn Peru 1-0 in their next home match.

But this has changed dramatically since Parreira, previously seen as unnecessarily cautious, changed his system to allow at least four of his quintet to play.

Nowadays, Parreira effectively fields four forwards two as out-and-out strikers and the other two just behind and the difference has been striking with Brazil hammering nine goals in their last two home games.

"Our players have to have the freedom to play," Parreira said before Sunday's match. "We give them the freedom to try things and to create."

"This means they are less robotic, less mechanical and much more creative and this makes the difference between our football and European football."

With so much in their favour, the biggest threat to Brazil could be, as the old cliché goes, Brazil themselves.

The last occasion when Brazil were such hot favourites was in 1982, when the team self-destructed in the second phase match against Italy, lost 3-2 and were knocked out.

Brazil also arrived at the 1990 World Cup as favourites but were knocked out in the second round by Argentina after a month of internal bickering over who should be in the team.

On the other hand, few people gave Brazil much of a chance in 2002 and they went on to win the trophy.

This time, the squad is united and the so-called bad boys such as Romario, famous for his outspoken praise of himself and his disdain for training, are a thing of the past.

But Parreira will still have to keep the players' feet on the ground as the nationalistic Brazilian media drums up an atmosphere of triumphalism.

"We have to be very careful, especially the younger players, because we haven't won anything yet," said midfielder Emerson.

Captain Cafu, heading for his fourth successive World Cup, said that being favourites should not be a problem.

"It's something that we can't run away from, but we mustn't let this lead to over-enthusiasm," he said.

The centre of the defence is still a worry, especially at set pieces, while Roberto Carlos sometimes gets carried away with his attacking role and leaves a huge space down the left flank.

Brazil's warm-up programme has often been a problem in the past, with teams such as Andorra, Iceland and Malaysia among the opponents, and critics blame the country's football federation for choosing lucrative matches over ones which will test the national team.

Brazil were due to play Sevilla in an exhibition match on Tuesday and have lined up a trip to the United Arab Emirates in November. English champions Chelsea are also said to be in the pipeline.

This programme has run roughshod over the wishes of Parreira, who last year said he wanted more matches against top European national teams.

Parreira also sees his team as depending too heavily on individual talent.

"We've still got a lot of work to do, especially on the collective side," he said. "We've got a lot of individual quality but we lack a sense of working collectively."

"There's no point in having outstanding individuals if the team as a whole is not coherent. This is what we are going to work on up to the World Cup."

— Internet Source

LANKA DIARY

FROM PAGE 12

REAL PRACTICE

A few eyebrows were raised when a Development Squad was named to play visiting Bangladesh national team in a three-day practice match before the Test series.

But the Lankan board had little option but to field a young side since their A team has been preoccupied with a crucial game against the touring South Africa A team. The Sri Lanka A team, led by Aviska Gunawardena, started the first of two four-day games against South Africa A on the same day at the NCC in Colombo.

The two teams will later be joined by New Zealand A for a tri-series.

But the third-string Lankan side, that featured three reserves from the A team, three players with little international experience and a few rising stars, were good enough to embarrass a full strength Bangladesh team. All the top batsmen except Javed Omar were sent back to the dressing room before lunch and most of them were running to the nets to do some knocking. That's what practice means for the Tigers!

DISCRIMINATION!

The Sri Lankan cricketers left the team hotel all smiling a day after their 3-0 triumph in the one-day series over Bangladesh. But Russel Arnold must have been embarrassed after being harshly treated by his employer.

The left-hander, who has regained his place in the national team after a long absence due to lack of form, reportedly got a raw deal from the interim Sri Lanka Cricket.

According to reports in local newspapers Arnold, who played 55 Tests, was offered only 2,000 dollars. The left-handed middle-order batsman declined to sign the contract because he thought it was unfair on him when rookies like Thilan Samarawee, Tilakaratne Dilshan and Rangana Herath signed 15,000-dollar contracts and Lasith Malinga 10,000.

Six leading players - captain Marvan Atapattu, Mahela Jayawardena, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan - all signed annual contracts of US 60,000 dollars.

OPEN TABLE TENNIS

Mahbub, Soma winners

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahbub clinched the men's while Soma the women's singles titles in the Metro Group Open Table Tennis tournament.

Mahbub beat Mostafa 4-3 in the final while Soma also registered the same margin victory against Rumi at the woodenfloor gymnasium yesterday.

On the final day of the competition, Hasib became champion in the boy's single event with a 5-2 victory against Rocky in the final.



Did U Know?

The first man to win the US Open was Arthur Ashe. He defeated Tom Okker 14-12, 5-7, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, in 1968.

Omar, Baisya save blushes

FROM PAGE 12

catch by a diving Shahriar Nafees at second slip sent back the same batsman as Syed Rasel gave the breakthrough.

Aftab took the other wicket to fall with a gem of a delivery that Malintha Gajjanayake had left only to see the off-stump uprooted.

Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque (Jr) really troubled the Lankans in his five-over spell. He had Kalavitiogoda edging the ball on 46 but it went through the gap between wicketkeeper Mashud and the first slip. Kalavitiogoda had also survived a chance earlier when Mashud failed to take an edge off Aftab.

"Had I stayed there with Tapash, we could have taken take the total to 240. It would have given the team more confidence in the Tests. My thanks goes to Tapash for doing a batsman's work," said Omar after the day's play.

Often tagged a slow player, Omar was in a more aggressive mood in this innings and refuted suggestions that his style was more suited for longer version matches.

"My strike rate is just over 50. No other batsman in my team has a strike rate over sixty. So how can I be branded as a like this?" he questioned.

"I was determined to stay at the wicket with the Tests coming. I had planned to play a long innings. It's totally different from one-dayers. A long innings in a practice match always gives batsmen extra confidence."

On a worrying note for the injury-prone Bangladesh side, Omar was hurt on his left arm by skidding delivery from Waruna and will have a x-ray to determine the type of injury.

SCORECARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the three-day practice match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka Development squad at the Clots Cricket Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

BANGLADESH: First innings
Javed lbw b Rupasinghe 81
N Iqbal c G de Silva b Lakshitha 0
Tushar b Lakshitha 0
Ashraf lbw b Waruna 9
S Nafees b Waruna 0
Aftab c Kalavitiogoda b Wijekoon 14

Mashud c G de Silva b Wijekoon 4
Manjarul lbw b Wijekoon 8
Tapash c Waruna b Rupasinghe 54
Rasel c Kalavitiogoda b Rupasinghe 4
Shahadat not out 5
Extras: (lb-1, w-4, nb-15) 20
Total: (All out in 45.3 overs) 195
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-9, 3-23, 4-27, 5-68, 6-90, 7-117, 8-151, 9-169, 10-195.

BOWLER
T Lakshitha 14 0 62 2
U Waruna 12 1 64 2
G Wijekoon 7 1 35 3
J Mendis 1 0 2 0
G Rupasinghe 7.3 1 31 3

SL DEVI SQUAD: First innings
Vithana c Nafees b Rasel 16
S Kalavitiogoda not out 54
M Gajjanayaka b Aftab 12
T Samarawera batting 4
Extras: (b-4, lb-6, nb-13) 20

Total: (For 2 wkts in 31 overs) 109
Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-95.

BOWLER
Rasel 8 0 24 1
Shahadat 7 0 24 0
Tapash 6 0 34 0
Enamul 5 2 8 0
Aftab 5 2 9 1

Massive fine

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh's practice match on Wednesday.

Rafique also looked in a better shape and was not limping like Tuesday. He even took part in the game as a substitute fielder after 23 overs of the local team's innings.

Meanwhile, injured pace bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortuza had a bone scan in the afternoon. The reports will be available on Thursday.

Clijsters, Sharapova

FROM PAGE 12

"But it gives me confidence I can pull it out like that."

Kiefer, who was the only man to take a set off world number one Federer during Wimbledon, took another off him before bowing, 6-4, 6-7, 6-3, 6-4.

Federer remains on course for a semifinal showdown with third seed Lleyton Hewitt, the Australian he thrashed in last year's final, after Hewitt won his fourth round match against Dominik Hrbaty with aplomb.

Before that Federer must beat dangerous Argentine 11th seed David Nalbandian, the 2003 semi-finalist who ousted Italian Davide Sanguinetti, in the quarterfinals.

Hewitt will play Finland's Jarkko Nieminen.

Nieminen earlier became the first Finn to reach a grand slam quarterfinal when he floored Spain's Fernando Verdasco 6-2, 7-6, 6-3.

Kiefer's ability to vary the pace of his shots has often troubled Federer in the past and the Swiss looked uneasy from the start on Arthur Ashe Court.

drous backhand winner to hold serve. He controlled the match thereafter.

The heavily disguised crosscourt winner was reminiscent of the one Federer played in the final game of his four-set struggle against Kiefer in the third round at Wimbledon.

Hewitt, the champion in 2001, hammered Hrbaty 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.

The Australian's only real distraction was the Slovak's dandy pink and black shirt with two holes cut out of the back.

Hewitt is not quite so in touch with his feminine side and said: "I didn't want to lose to a bloke wearing a shirt like that."

His win meant he has reached the quarterfinals at Flushing Meadows six times in a row.

Unseeded Nieminen, who knocked Andre Agassi out of the French Open in the first round in May, stretched out on his back to savour his win.

He said: "It's my best achievement. There's not too many Finnish players. I'm very proud to play for my country."

Nalbandian saw off Sanguinetti 4-6, 7-6, 6-4, 6-2 and will face Federer with some confidence, having won five of their previous seven encounters.

— Internet Source

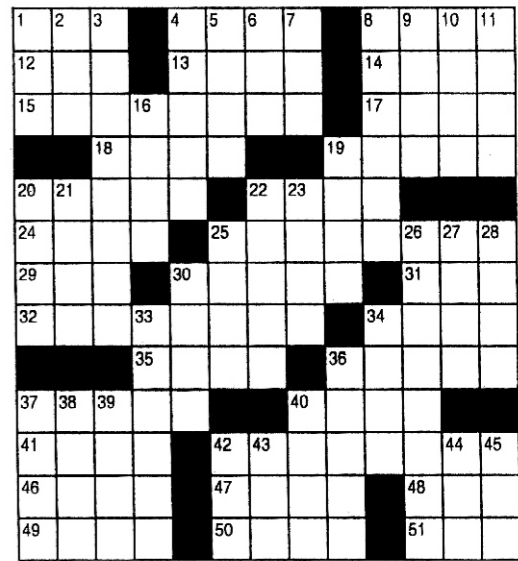
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Texas Hold 'Em offering in
4 Jack Benny's explosive
8 Showroom sample
12 Will Smith biopic
13 Screen-writer James
14 'Metamorphoses' poet
15 Pratfall or pie-in-the-face
17 Put together
18 Weeding implements
19 Breaks bread
20 He's not himself today
22 Picnic hamperer
24 Obscene
25 Private
29 Oklahoma city
30 He made us turn corners

DOWN
1 — relief city
2 New Haven student
3 Penny pincher
4 Tend to the garden
5 Early birds?
6 Meadow
7 'The Amazing Race' episode
8 Half-mask
9 Hunter
10 Karaoke need
11 Rapturous writings

Solution time: 25 mins.

ATOP P L W A V G W
LIVE W A L E N A
PEAR R A W A R I E S
SALAMI L I N B
MELBA T O A S T
STAIN L I S T A E
WILD L A O P I T A
ARC T A M E L B A
PEACH W E L B A
SHEEP G O A B S E N T
RENO G H O I N I N S
OXEN N O R C O S T



CRYPTOQUIP

D B R J A Y U I N A A E A R Z I
Q R V I N M N H Q U R M N J Q

B X I M D C I Q R A Y I U Q X R H I

C J E H X N Z I N N V A N H Q .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOME THIEVES STOLE YOUR STRING INSTRUMENT, I'D SAY YOU MIGHT FEEL VIOL-ATED.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals L

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.